

By Congressman Vern Buchanan

On Tuesday, Americans across the country spoke with one voice and sent a clear message to Washington: “No more!”

No more spending what we don’t have.

No more raising taxes during taxing times.

No more rewarding failure with bonuses and bailouts.

And no more political posturing while Americans are losing their jobs, their homes, their savings, and the dreams they have for their children.

It is the same message I heard at the more than 20 town halls I held throughout the district.

According to a recent ABC News survey, only 50 percent of Americans believe that the American Dream is still a possibility.

Children are 25 percent of our population, but 100 percent of our future. They need to know that the American Dream can still be achieved.

This is not a time to curse the fates but to rebuild the prosperity that was once the envy of the world. We do this by pulling together, not by pulling apart.

The hard work ahead cannot be assigned to just one political party or just one branch of government. Our government was designed by its founders to flourish through opposition, debate, and collaboration—the refining fire that turns rough ideas into the policies that will allow

our country to succeed.

The success we seek will come when small businesses are treated with the same respect as big businesses. When Main Street gets more than the leftovers from Wall Street. And when the government insists on balancing the books just as families do in order to make ends meet.

When I arrived in Congress four years ago, the first bill I introduced was a constitutional balanced budget amendment. It required Washington to spend no more than it takes in, just like 49 of 50 states are required to do across the country. Congress didn't act on my proposal then, but with a \$13 trillion debt, it should do so now. Our national debt is projected to double in five years and triple in 10. It is time to demand that government tightens its belt while all Americans are tightening theirs.

With millions of jobs already lost and nearly 15 million Americans striving to find work, job creation is priority number one. And when it comes to job creation, we've got to promote and encourage the innovative spirit made possible by people, not intrusive government.

We must cut the red tape and burdensome regulations that have businesses drowning in paperwork when they should be growing and creating jobs. And we must use the tax code as an incentive, not a punishment for someone daring to become an entrepreneur.

If Congress fails to act and allows the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 to expire on Dec. 31, a family of four making \$50,000 a year would pay an additional \$2,900 in taxes. A single mom earning \$36,000 a year could get hit with a \$1,100 increase. And over 30 million families would see their taxes go up in the neighborhood of \$1,000.

Small business will feel the pinch the hardest and be reluctant to hire. The uncertainty over whether the tax cuts will be extended has already discouraged job growth.

In times like these raising taxes is not just bad policy, it's immoral. The best thing we could do for families and job creation is to extend the current rates.

We also need legal reform to curb frivolous lawsuits that force businesses to lay off workers, bankrupt companies, and raise consumer prices.

Florida has a unique opportunity to be a gateway to the rest of the world as we are home to 14 Ports, including Port Manatee in our backyard. That is why I will continue to push for Congress to pass free trade agreements. Free Trade will help Florida expand its economy, and bring in good paying jobs. Free trade is a cornerstone to Florida's future.

It's time to reawaken the sleeping giant and restore America's standing as a vibrant and prosperous nation. The work begins now.

This is no time for the new majority in Congress to celebrate a political victory but to rededicate itself to make Washington work for all the people. That means letting the sun shine in so that secret deals and backroom bribes become relics of the past. It means putting principle above partisanship, conscience above expediency and on every vote, putting country first.

True leadership isn't about shouting for attention, but standing up for all the people who are struggling — the senior citizens, the young families, the veterans, the small businessperson.

The American people want Congress and the White House to come together and get our country back on track. Working together we can keep the American Dream alive for our children and their children.